DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 033 003 RE 001 963

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PROGRESS 13 In Action.

Pub Date 2 May 69

Note-12p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association conference, Kansas City, Mo., Apr. 30-May 3, 1969.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.70

Descriptors-*Corrective Reading, Inservice Teacher Education, Intermediate Grades, Reading Diagnosis, Reading Difficulty, *Reading Programs, Remedial Reading, Rural School Systems

A description of an ESEA/Title III reading improvement project serving 10 rural school systems in central Georgia is presented. Four stages of development are discussed: inquiry, invention, demonstration, and adaptation. Inquiry involved determining the extent of reading disability among children in grades 4 through 7. Consultants conducted workshops and provided guidance in the establishment of a comprehensive, flexible, and individualistic reading program. Diagnostic testing and remedial and corrective instruction were demonstrated. Five staff members from the project returned to the classroom, adapting the corrective program to the regular school program. Evaluation of the project has revealed significant changes in the beahvior of teachers and other school personnel. (RT)

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PROGRESS 13 In Action

Films and Illustrated Lectures
Friday, May 2, 1969, 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Superstition has it that thirteen is an unlucky number. Those persons who are affected by PROGRESS 13 have not found this to be the case. PROGRESS 13, a Title III ESEA or PACE project serving ten school systems in rural central Georgia, is concerned with improving the reading performances of children.

PACE (Projects to Advance Creativity in Education) was designed to encourage school districts to seek creative solutions to educational problems. Grants for such projects, made on the merits of proposals, are funded to school districts for the development of innovative and exemplary programs that can serve as models to be adapted to existing school programs. Projects, usually funded for a three-year period, evolve through four significant stages. These stages are:

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Inquiry, Invention, Demonstration, and Adaptation. The activities of PROGRESS 13 will be discussed as they have evolved and are presently moving through these four stages.

Inquiry

Three classroom teachers in the school later to be chosen as the demonstration school were burdened with the realization that many children had reading problems which were preventing their success in school. This problem was discussed with principals, curriculum directors, county school superintendents, and other administrative personnel throughout thirteen school systems in the area. This concern resulted in a Title III Planning Grant entitled "Developing a Pilot Reading Program" being presented to the Washington County Board of Education. Thirteen school systems cooperated in the surveying of needs and the invention of the program that followed. An Advisory Board was formed. In addition to representatives from the thirteen school systems, two colleges are represented on the board.

A reading survey encompassing twelve of the school systems was made to determine the extent of reading disability prevalent among children in grades four through seven in this rural central Georgia area. Data were coded on 11,311 children. A formula was used to identify students who were reading below their reading expectancy levels. Applying the formula to the data also revealed the degree to which each student was disabled. According to the survey one child in four could be considered a severely disabled reader. A severely disabled reader is defined as one reading more than a year and one-half

below his reading expectancy level as determined by tests results. A need was thus established. Inquiry into reading programs throughout the nation and into research had begun in the initial planning stages. Visitations to remedial reading programs were made. Cultural and personality adjustment studies were conducted.

Invention

Using knowledge from basic research, knowledge derived from research conducted during the stage of inquiry, and ideas gathered from projects throughout the nation, a pilot program was initiated with twenty-six severely disabled readers in a school chosen to be the demonstration school. Most students came to the Reading Center from their regular classrooms; however, for a few students, work in a special reading class meant a longer school day. This program, remedial and corrective, was not designed to supplant, but to supplement the reading program in the regular classroom. Students were taught in classes ranging in size from one to six for thirty minutes to one hour on two to three days a week. Teaching methods were comprehensive, creative, flexible, individualistic, and highly motivative. The philosophy that permeated each teaching session was to respect every child as an individual, to show faith in his ability, and to create a learning environment where success was achieved. Each child's program was planned according to his needs and interests.

Diagnoses and evaluations were continuous processes. Daily logs and diagnostic folders were kept. Teacher evaluations were made. Parents' Night Programs were conducted. Programs designed to orient

parents to the program were presented largely by the students themselves. Parent-teacher conferences were conducted. Although it is extremely difficult to evaluate changes in attitudes, it was noted that students who had never before read a book for fun were now reading. Children ran to the Reading Center and were reluctant to leave. Students not in the program asked if they, too,could join "The Reading Club."

The most important objective aspect of the evaluation concerned comparisons of the rate of growth during the study for each student participating with his or her growth rate prior to entrance into the program. Twenty-four students remained in the program for the entire teaching period. This period between pretests and posttests was eight and one-half months. The average growth rate of students prior to their entry into the program was 53 per cent. The rate of growth for the period between pretests and posttests was 105 per cent.

Though the emphasis at this stage was upon invention of a program, 170 persons observed the work being done in this pilot study. In-service education was conducted. Consultants from throughout the nation visited the program. Not only did these consultants provide valuable guidance to the staff, they helped conduct workshops and conferences for staff members and for classroom teachers and administrative personnel from the participating area.

A grant to operate was first awarded the Washington County Board of Education for the school year 1967-68. The operational project is entitled PROGRESS 13. PROGRESS is an acrostic for Pilot Reading Organization with Guidance through Research, Experimentation, and

Scientific Study. The thirteen denotes the thirteen systems participating during the planning stage*.

Demonstration

Various stages of Title III projects have many overlapping features. The demonstration stage began even while a program was being invented. The demonstration of a program conducted in Washington County Schools reached its peak during the first operational year. Even though 298 students were instructed in one of three corrective and/or remedial centers, emphasis was upon in-service education. Project personnel recognized the classroom teacher as the key person in education. Consultants and diagnostic services were also given priority during this demonstration stage. A reading services center was established. Students were brought to the reading services center, or reading clinic, for both educational and psychological evaluations. Clinicians and a psychologist also moved in the participating systems to provide diagnostic services. Approximately 1,700 students received the described services.

It has been stated that 298 students were instructed in the remedial and corrective teaching stations. Programs and procedures were similar to those conducted during the stage of invention. Students were, however, instructed from two to five days per week rather than

*Fourteen different systems have been served at some point. One system joined during the first operational year. Four systems were declared in non-compliance to civil rights and were, therefore, denied service. Ten systems now participate in the project.

from two to three days as was true during the stage of invention. Subjective evaluations accomplished included those made by classroom teachers, parents, and students.

An objective evaluation revealed that the average growth for students receiving "special" instruction for seven months between the pretests and posttests was 10.6 months. The average rate of growth prior to the pretests was 56 per cent; the rate for the period between the two tests was 152 per cent.

The students who received these services for six months between the pretests and posttests made average gains of 8.2 months. The average rate of growth prior to the pretests was 64 per cent; the rate for the period between the two tests was 137 per cent.

For the students who received these services for five months between the pretests and posttests, the average gain was 9.7 months. The average rate of growth for the period between the two tests was 193 per cent; prior average growth rate had been 88 per cent.

The method used for computing growth rates was devised by the project director. Results may be viewed as gross interpretations.

Two aspects of the program were demonstrated: diagnostic testing and remedial and corrective instruction. Five hundred twenty-seven persons observed these two facets of the project. A two-way mirror and an intercom were utilized.

A total of 1,619 persons came to the PROGRESS 13 Reading Center to participate in the many and varied in-service activities. Project personnel also conducted in-service programs outside the demonstration system where the PROGRESS 13 staff is housed. In-service activities

were afforded 2,832 classroom teachers and school administrative personnel. The staff made numerous professional visits and participated in in-service courses and workshops.

A pilot project was undertaken with 427 culturally deprived six, seven, and eight-year-olds. Project personnel worked with thirteen classroom teachers in a program designed to improve communication skills and to provide experiences for culturally deprived children. This phase of the program, known as SCOPE (Skills Communication with Opportunities for Personal Experiences), is now (1968-69) reaching 1,066 students.

The project year (1968-69) is a transitional year. While certain phases of the present project are being demonstrated, other phases are being adapted to the regular school program. Consultant services, diagnostic services, and in-service education have been broadened, but are presently operating similarly to those activities in the 1967-68 project year. Corrective and/or remedial programs have been partially phased out; however, these programs are still being demonstrated.

Two new objectives were stated in the 1968-69 proposal. These relate to the teaching of reading to five-year-olds in a pre-primary program and the initiation of a program for severely emotionally disturbed children. The latter program is operating as a community project initiated by PROGRESS 13.

Project personnel feel that the teaching of reading to five-year-olds has been one of the most exciting endeavors undertaken in the project. This program operates free of undue pressure. Curricula developed at the Research and Development Center in Educational

Stimulation, University of Georgia, are being used. Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight students in the program are reading and are apparently enjoying it. Other subject areas are not overlooked.

Adaptation

Five staff members of PROGRESS 13 returned to the classroom at the beginning of this project year as regular classroom teachers. Requests to demonstrate corrective reading in the classroom were numerous. These five teachers serve as demonstration classroom teachers. This is viewed as an adaptation of the corrective program to the regular school program. Next year the SCOPE project previously discussed will be adapted through a diagnostic teacher-training program.

This diagnostic teacher-training program will be the major focus for the phase-out project year (1969-70). Diagnostic services, consultant services, in-service education, and the pre-primary program will continue.

Over the past two years this project has been in operation, it has become apparent that if an adaptation of the diagnostic program, including the teaching of corrective and remedial reading, is to take place, an intensive training program is needed. The Washington County School System has agreed to release six teachers for a three-month period to receive diagnostic teacher-training, making it possible for eighteen teachers to receive this training over a period of one school year. These eighteen teachers, six full-time equivalent persons, will be considered clinic teachers. After the initial orientation period, under the direction of Title III staff members, the teachers will serve

as corrective and/or remedial teachers, diagnosticians, and resource teachers. A resource teacher is considered one who works in a classroom with the regular classroom teacher for a specific purpose (e.g., to show the teacher how a given material might be utilized).

Those teachers being released at a given time will be replaced by fully qualified teachers. When the clinic teachers return to their regular classrooms after a three-month training period, the teachers who have replaced them will move to six different classrooms to supplant six more teachers. The last three months of the school year the teachers who have made two moves will become the clinic teachers while the second group of teachers in training resume their usual classroom positions. It is anticipated that these teachers will replace six more teachers in the fall of 1970 and that the cycle will continue until all teachers in Title I schools for whom such training appears to be feasible have completed the training program being described.

Diagnostic tests will be administered to the teachers in training as a part of their program. Not only will this enable the consultants, specialists, and clinicians to demonstrate the administration of certain tests but, it will also allow for first-hand knowledge of and interpretation of the tests. While the results will be kept confidential, they will provide the clinic teacher with information needed to help her formulate her own objectives leading to professional growth. They will also enable a PROGRESS 13 staff member to serve more effectively as her supervisor.

It is deemed desirable that the clinic teacher will improve her

own teaching skills through a multi-approach. She will receive on-the-job training, participate in the regular in-service workshops to be held twice each month, teach remedial students under supervision, work in a regular classroom as a resource teacher, and be guided into working on her own weaknesses in reading or work-study skills.

After four weeks of concentrated training the six teachers will begin to work as a part of a team in the teaching of corrective or remedial reading three days each week. One day every week the teachers will spend one-half day in the classroom to which they will return. They will also serve as resource teachers in the SCOPE program. The teachers will put into practice, under the guidance of their supervisors, the techniques or ideas gained from the training sessions. A fifth day each week will be spent in professional growth. This will include participating in the workshops twice each month (every other Tuesday). Alternate Tuesdays will be spent in a type of seminar where specific concerns can be explored. Some time each day will be set aside for the improvement of reading skills and study skills of the trainees.

There will be a conscious and gradual effort to prepare the teachers and students for the return of the clinic teachers into the classroom. Hopefully, they will return better prepared teachers - teachers with improved skills, teachers who have keen awareness of individual differences and of how to meet individual needs in their classrooms.

The four-week training program will remain flexible in order to meet individual needs. The staff of PROGRESS 13 will relate to individual teachers in the same manner that they are encouraged to relate to

individual students.

Though this service is planned for employees of Title I in Washington County, participating systems will be invited to send persons for similar training. The training will be so individualized that it can be made continuous on a daily or weekly basis to those who might participate from another system.

All information concerning individual tests scores of teachers in training will be kept confidential. It is extremely difficult to identify "good teaching" or "bad teaching." Because of these two factors an evaluation of this objective will be difficult to obtain. General statements will be made as to the average improvement in pretest and posttest scores. For example, such information as "The average score of trainees revealed ____ months of growth in the area of ____" will be given. Principals and curriculum supervisors will be asked to make statements regarding the changes in behavior they note among the trainees, with reference to teacher behavior before and after the three-month training period. Improvements among students with whom these clinic teachers work in corrective and remedial classes will be noted. Classroom teachers in whose classrooms the trainee acts as resource teacher will be asked to submit a subjective type evaluation of the value of services rendered. Reference is made here to the adaptation of the SCOPE program. Each trainee will be asked to submit a self-evaluation. The evaluation believed to be most significant will be made as a joint decision relative to the growth of each trainee by her supervising teacher and the trainee.

Impact

PROGRESS 13 is a program in action. Evaluations received from vast numbers of people having received services and observations made by project personnel have revealed that the project is having significant effects upon changes in behavior of teachers and other school personnel.

Highly structured organizational plans of schools where the teacher's major role is a lecturer and the goal for the student is grade level performance are gradually changing. There is conclusive evidence that the schools are viewing the teacher's role as being a guide to meaningful learning and the student's goal as being unique to the individual. Emphasis is given to exploration of ideas, student involvement, and critical thinking. It is evident that progress has been and is being made in this direction; however, it is recognized that change comes slowly. There is a need for more in-service and consultant work to help teachers fit the curriculum to the student rather than attempting to fit the students into a preconceived curriculum. When such a curriculum becomes a complete reality, it is felt that the majority of reading problems will be forestalled.

The twenty-three staff members of PROGRESS 13 would like to invite you to Washington County, Georgia, a small rural county with a population of 18,800. Visitors are always welcome at PROGRESS 13.